

Belonging

by Kare Uta

Category: HakuÅ•ki/è-„æ;æé¬¼

Genre: Friendship, Hurt-Comfort

Language: English

Characters: Hijikata T., Saito H.

Status: Completed

Published: 2011-09-22 01:41:48

Updated: 2011-09-22 01:41:48

Packaged: 2016-04-26 21:11:20

Rating: T

Chapters: 1

Words: 2,522

Publisher: www.fanfiction.net

Summary: For a very long time the only wish he had was 'I want a place of my own'; only one place would take him in, and it was one more place than he thought he ever deserved.
Oneshot.

Belonging

****Belonging****

I just want a place to belong.

That was what he thought for a long time; the only thing he really desired for a long time. There was no place that would take this killer though.

I just want someone...

Is the only thing he could think after a while, even when his first wish was never granted. Somehow he believed that even wishing, just for a short while, under the blanket of stars would be of some consolation to him, and that maybe they would come true. How naiive of him, he had often thought, but he would have been more naiive to think that having strength meant you needed nothing to believe in.

His body ached but he could hardly tell at this point; it all just felt cold.

It was only by chance that he had stumbled across the Roshigumi. The Roshigumi being the only people who had ever accepted him. Thinking about it now he must have been such a masochist; after the beating he had taken previously he still felt the need to challenge someone from there. He was determined not to lose, and he didn't either.

When Hijikata Toshizo and Kondo Isami stopped the fight from

progressing, and stopped them from killing each other, he expected to get the usual accusations, beatings and throwing out. What he got instead was something that he would forever be thankful for...

Kondo had turned to him, _"Although I only saw a part of your match, I see you've got great skills. What's your name?" _

Saitou couldn't hide his astonishment when he heard those words. What his name was, who he was, where he was from; none of that ever mattered in a situation like this.

The older larger man seemed concerned suddenly, _"What is it? Was it something I said?"_

Saito shook his head, still a little dumbfounded, _"No..." _

There's bewilderment in his voice and he had no idea how he looked now but he surely must have seemed strange to him. _"It's just that... I'm a left-handed swordsman. Didn't you notice?"_

"_Huh? Oh. I've heard that lefties are often talented. So it's true." _

Had he not been so taken aback by the rare...compliment, he would have wondered if this man was stupid for misinterpreting his question.

And then Hijikata-san spoke, having probably understood by his expressions and surprise, _"What's that about? Was that what people in other dojos said? Left-handed or right-handed, a victory is a victory. It's just that they can't take a defeat. How disgraceful."_

Those words that rang over and over still caused his heart to flutter in his chest. In that moment something hard inside became warm and melted under the tenderness.

After that he continued to meet with everyone once he was accepted, meeting with them to practice and to have their meals. He refused to burden the group any further than that, and continued to live alone in whatever places would let him in, but more so on the streets. He offered whatever money he had to both Commander and Vice Commander and often enough neither one of them would take it from, claiming he took too little from them for them to be able to accept his money. He enjoyed the time he spent with everyone though; he had never been around so many different personalities, and all of which seemed to accept him rather quickly. Be it a simple dinner in the dojo or a night out of drinking it was always fun and however painful it was to separate for the night he always left with a warm feeling.

Around the time they were struck with some more financial troubles he had begun to visit them less and less, see them for even less meals than he used to. The pain in his chest from the past slowly resurfaced.

As though his life wasn't hard enough being a left-handed samurai in a place where no one would accept him he had made the mistake of killing a hatamoto. He hadn't planned on doing it! He just got so angry and before he knew it it was over and before he really had time to defend himself he was beaten and had to disappear in the only way

he could.

He ran and he tried to disappear, going as far as changing his name and trying to pretend that everything in his past never happened. He became paranoid and jumpy though, but came to terms with the fact that one day he would have to pay to someone for what he did, and how carelessly he had taken a life in what had almost been a sport.

_I was just trying to find something of my own... _

He just wanted a place to himself, a place where he was good at something, respected and accepted for something. Instead, he ventured down the same path he always did like a masochist and lay here beneath the stars, bruised and bleeding from another beating by a group that simply saw him as a cheater. As the tears poured down his face, the cold touching them and reminding him he was still alive, he swore that if he was blessed enough to be able to wake up in the morning he would make his way back to them. The only thing forcing him to wake the next morning was the faces of all those members that had welcomed him in the first place.

They gave him everything he had ever asked for, and offered it to him with a smile.

When he had the strength to wake up he went and made an effort to clean himself up before he started his journey. He felt almost cowardly; things had begun to get difficult to handle on his own and he ran towards the only people who would accept him. He was really as low as they got, he thought.

There weren't many people at the headquarters but he was directed to Hijikata. With the man's gentle probing he confessed what had happened to him since he had stopped visiting the group. Hijikata gave a sigh, though he didn't seem to be as disappointed in him as he would have expected, "I won't repeat this to anyone other than Kondo-san."

He felt a little relieved and his heart continued to warm as Hijikata accepted his desire to stay with them, train and fight beside them. Although he felt that way he was taken aback once Hijikata smiled briefly, standing, "We'll discuss everything tomorrow." He ushered him down a hallway, "The others are out so now would be a good time to get some rest."

"Duties? I can..."

Hijikata raised a hand to silence him promptly, "You'll take this opportunity to rest."

Rest? Saito hardly knew the meaning of the word anymore. He would hardly call laying in the dirt the way he had been rest.

He led him, more like ushered him, down the hall before opening up a room and stepping in, "You can share a room with Souji and Sannan." He was pulling out all the things necessary for comfortable sleeping arrangements, laying them out on the ground briefly before standing, "Get some sleep."

"But I can..."

"Consider it an order."

The Vice Commander gave him a small encouraging smile as he closed the door he felt himself relax.

When he laid his exhausted body down onto the soft surface he felt all the aches he had been enduring hit him with full force. For as long as he had been travelling he could see a goal in his mind and he could ignore the pain. He took comfort in the touch of pain tonight and allowed himself to doze off, knowing that the next day he would need to be well-rested in order to prove to everyone that he could fulfil his Shinsengumi duties.

Later on into the night Souji crept into his room with Sannan. Upon seeing Saito not stirring at all Souji crouched down beside him a childish grin on his face, "Hijikata-san was right; he's exhausted!"

"Try not to wake him then."

"I won't, I won't." Souji chuckled and with his usual childish grin leaned over to pull the blanket up to Saito's shoulders. "What do you think about him joining?"

"He's certainly skilled."

Souji laid himself out on his uneven bedding, "That sounds like its about to be followed with 'but'."

"No 'but'; his addition will surely be extremely useful."

"Hijikata-san certainly spoke about him with enthusiasm."

"He makes an excellent addition." Sannan repeated with a sigh, getting under the blankets.

"Well, I don't think people who act all tough are really as tough as they say seem," Souji grumbled.

"You would know, wouldn't you, Souji?" Sannan called over his shoulder, another sigh following.

"What's that supposed to mean?" Had it been anyone else Souji may have lashed out, but this was Sannan-san, someone who was just like a brother to him so more than anything he only felt a little offended. "Sannan!" He reached over and nudged the older man, calling his name in a whining tone. "Tell me, what did you mean by that!"

Sannan rolled over onto his other side, "Go to sleep, Souji; we have duties in the morning."

"_You_ have duties in the morning!" Souji reminded teasingly. "I'm not even patrolling tomorrow."

"If I don't get any sleep because of you then I'll change that myself." Sannan said crossly.

Shortly Souji finished changing and got under his covers, whispering a quiet 'goodnight' before going to sleep. Such a light sleeper later

in the night Sannan couldn't help hearing the quiet sharp intake of breath across the room; he dared not move just yet. The shadow gracing the wall thanks to some light outside said that Saito had sat up.

He seemed to have picked up his swords from the ground as he heard the distinct knocking sound of the metal hilt against the ground. His steps hardly made a sound but the door opening and closing signified he had exited. He took a seat outside, inhaling the cool night air very deeply; he wouldn't believe he would miss the scent of the night so quickly. Feeling something approaching, very faint and quiet, he unsheathed his katana and pointed it right at whoever seemed to have tried to sneak up on him.

The Vice Commander put his hand over the weapon, lowering it with a smirk, "Your senses are sharp; maybe too much."

"My apologies." He sheathed the katana promptly.

Hijikata sat down, Saito following, "Are you having second thoughts?"

"Absolutely not." Saito replied, calm and composed.

Hijikata was taken aback by that, resisting staring at him with both eyebrows raised, "Really? That's... Most people usually do."

"I'm not most people."

To anyone else that would have sounded like a proud and over-confident brag, but to the Vice Commander it was a simple statement of fact as he noted the other man gingerly touching the sheathed weapons on his right side. "Is that what you're thinking about?"

"You accepted me despite everything..." Saito pointed out thoughtlessly, trailing off. He glanced over, "If I ask 'why?' I don't think I'll get an answer."

"No, you certainly won't," Hijikata replied, smirking. "It's very easy for me to give you answers but would you really listen if I did? Wouldn't it mean more if you worked hard and tried to understand it for yourself?"

"If you, whom I respect so much, can tell me then maybe I'll..."

"You won't." Saito silenced himself after the Vice Commander interrupted him. "What I say will make no difference. Use your skills and learn for yourself how and why you're valuable. Each and every one of us have a reason we shouldn't be accepted, but we accept each other in an attempt to make things right. By believing that what you've done means that you're undeserving is an insult to the rest of us who also have things that could make us undeserving."

"In order to respect everyone I should start by respecting myself." Saito said hesitantly, unsure if he understood the Vice Commander correctly.

The older man nodded his head, humming in the affirmative before

standing, "If we can all respect each other then we can look after each other; we'll be a solid unified team." He extended his arm, a welcoming supportive hand in front of Saito, "We rely on each other; making up for each other's flaws."

"I've never relied on anyone."

"You'll get used to it." Hijikata-san then moved his hand closer, smiling, "Small steps." Saito stared at the hand with wide eyes, then looking back up at the Vice commander. In that moment, he realized how starved of affection he had been. Hijikata took his hand himself and then hoisted the tired abused body off the ground. "Smaller steps than I thought."

"I'm sorry."

With a hand on his back Hijikata led him back to his room, "Don't be sorry for things that are so out of your control."

Saito forced them both to an abrupt stop. Hijikata seemed to admire the sudden confident image of Saito who stared him right in the eye, "I do belong as a member of the Shinsengumi, Hijikata and Saito could hear the slight break as he strained to say it with real confidence, "I'll give it only my best."

"I'm glad." Hijikata crossed his arms against his chest, "Now, get some rest, recover."

Saito nodded his head firmly, turning to his room. "Thank you, Vice Commander."

"You..." Hijikata grumbled, making his way back to his room, "What are you thanking me for? Go to sleep!" And the Demon Vice Commander returned.

Saito bowed his head, smiling as he quietly returned to bed.

Amongst the people he belonged with. Amongst people who would look out for him.

_Thank you. _

* * *

><p>For example if I could change your future I'd risk so much as my soul

What you have to do now is to explain how far your weakness goes

* * *

><p>AN: It was so tough but it's finally done. I was in a bit of a dark place when I started, and a bit of a better place later on so at times it wasn't coming out as I planned but...I'm happy with it. Toshi is so hard to write though! He's so...stern a lot of the time but he does have a softer side when he's alone with someone, especially Saito whom we know he ends up trusting immensely later on.
**

**A big thank you goes to my dearest friend who really helped me with

this without even knowing she did! **

End
file.